



# **NEWS FROM JACK SCOTT**

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## **21<sup>ST</sup> SENATE DISTRICT**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
FEBRUARY 22, 2002

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### **HEARING AIDS FOR CALIFORNIA'S DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN**

*Senator Jack Scott introduces Senate Bill 1638*

BURBANK - At a news conference in Burbank today, Senator Jack Scott (D-Burbank/Pasadena) introduced legislation aimed at providing hearing aids for California's children. SB 1638 requires group health insurance plans to provide hearing aid coverage for deaf and hard-of-hearing children under 18 years of age.

"Susan Grafman came to see me in my office and told me how difficult it was for her to get hearing aids for her two boys," explained Senator Scott. "I was surprised when she told me her family's health insurance didn't cover the cost of hearing aids even though one boy was deaf and the other needed a hearing aid to understand what people were saying. It seemed that this was the kind of situation health insurance should be covering."

"I was devastated when the insurance company turned us down," declared Susan Grafman. "The hearing aids for Justin and Jake cost several thousand dollars each and need to be replaced as the kids grow. The costs just seemed staggering."

Senator Scott decided to do something to help the many families, like the Grafmans, struggling to pay for hearing aids. According to the latest U.S. census figures, there are some 7,700 deaf children in California and another 137,000 with some kind of hearing loss. Medi-Cal and Healthy Families programs cover the cost of hearing-aids for low-income children, but those with private insurance are often left to pay the costs on their own. The consequences for young children with hearing loss can be devastating.

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"I am most concerned with young children who need to hear clearly in order to learn speech and function well in school," said Scott. "The experts tell us that if children have difficulty hearing, they could have speech and learning problems that last a lifetime. We want these kids to have the same opportunities to learn as everybody else."

Five other states have enacted similar legislation: Connecticut, Maryland, Oklahoma, Oregon and Rhode Island. SB 1638 is supported by California Speech-Language Pathologists.

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